

Zim calls for bidders to erect base stations

In a bid to improve poor mobile network penetration into the country, Zimbabwe has announced a US\$24 million tender for the erection of more base stations, the national telecommunications regulator has said.

The Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) said the new tender for potential bidders would close at the end of October 2012 - by which base erection exercise would have started.

In a statement, POTRAZ said winning or successful bidders were expected to install 43 base stations across the country with the sole purpose of improving both voice and data quality network.

Zimbabwe boasts of three mobile network operators comprising Econet Wireless, Telecel Zimbabwe and the state-owned NetOne cellphone companies, while the sole fixed telephone landline operator TelOne makes the fourth telecommunications company.

According to POTRAZ, the exercise would be funded from the \$24 million Universal Services Fund (USF).

"Tenders are invited from established and qualified civil and structural engineering companies for the design and installation of passive telecommunications infrastructure in designated rural areas of Zimbabwe under the USF," the statement read.

POTRAZ recently threatened to fine the mobile network operators for providing poor quality network service to over 9 million cellphone subscribers in the country. The authority also challenged Econet Wireless, Telecel Zimbabwe, NetOne and TelOne to share their infrastructure or risk losing their operating licences.

As that was not enough, POTRAZ recently accused the country's leading mobile network operator - Econet Wireless of overcharging call rates yet with poor network.

However, Econet responded by saying its charges were among the lowest within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) regional block.

The cash injection of \$24 million drawn from the USF would also finance the expansion of telecoms services in outlying areas which are under serviced.